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AUTHOR Miller, Suzanne M.
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ABSTRACT

Internationally, educators are calling for teachers to help students learn to respect and value social and cultural difference. Literature teachers can also contribute to such a revolution in consciousness through literature study. It is crucial to education in a multicultural society that students are taught ways of reading and talking about literature which create respect for multiple perspectives. One means of doing this is through a "dialogic pedagogy," a conversational teaching approach in which the teacher and students engage in purposeful collaboration, guiding and inviting each other in talk and activity. Since readers construct different meanings from identical texts, text discussion can be particularly suited to provoke an interplay of differences. However, research indicates that such reflection about different perspectives rarely occurs in American schools, including literature classes, in which many teachers still rely on closed questioning. After observing teachers who successfully created conditions that produced motivated discussions about texts, four principles emerged: (1) inducing a new stance towards texts; (2) provoking collaborative reflection about alternatives; (3) scaffolding dialogic heuristics; and (4) encouraging student-initiated and sustained dialogic inquiry. If multicultural education is limited to new book lists or curricular add-ons, it may fail to become an integral part of student and citizen consciousness. (A list of 59 references is attached.) (HB)

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Suzanne M. Miller

National Research Center on
Literature Teaching & Learning
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY • SUNY

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Suzanne M. Miller

National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning
University at Albany
State University of New York
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12222

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Creating Change:
Towards a Dialogic Pedagogy

Suzanne M. Miller
State University of New York at Albany

Open-mindedness about human differences may be the proper disposition of the mind, philosophers and psychologists have argued, but it is not the "natural" one (e.g., Paul, 1984; Ageyev, 1981). Internationally, educators now call for helping students learn to respect and value sociocultural difference. As we approach the twenty-first century in our richly diverse society and world, working toward this goal could contribute to social justice and empower individuals intellectually, emotionally, and morally. But how, practically, do we achieve this valuing of sociocultural difference in our schools? In particular, how can we contribute to such a revolution in consciousness through literature study?

Many educators argue that we need to change the school curriculum from primary school to the university by adding multicultural literatures and cultural information to our courses of study. This is a pressing need. Yet current analyses of literacy and literature in multicultural education in America (Miller and McCaskill, in press) suggest that changing the curriculum, as a single solution, is problematic. There are many difficulties: How do we identify and select representative materials without being "tokenist" or "exclusionist"? How do we find enough time and space in a crowded curriculum for studying all possible cultures and subcultures? And how do we deal with students who reject multicultural texts as "alien" because they have learned to read only from a dominant cultural perspective?

I believe it is crucial to education in a multicultural society that we teach ways of reading and talking about literature which create respect for multiple sociocultural perspectives and provide the social-cognitive means for learning to understand them. In short, we need to change traditional classroom discourse with a new world view. To that end, I want to suggest the promise of what I call a "dialogic pedagogy," a conversational teaching approach in which the teacher and students engage in purposeful collaboration, guiding and inviting each other in talk and activity. A major feature of this dialogic pedagogy is exploring multiple perspectives by shuttling between generating responses, ideas, interpretations and questioning, testing, evaluating them. Derived from a synthesis of results from my empirical studies of open-forum literature discussions, the fundamental principles of this dynamic, transformative classroom approach derive from reconstruing the purposes for literacy and literature. In this essay, I first discuss the role of literature in a dialogic pedagogy in contrast to traditional American literature instruction. Then, I elaborate the major principles that I have found consistently in innovative classrooms where text discussion has begun to change student thinking over time.

The Role of Literature Discussion

Literary theory and numerous empirical studies over the past 20 years have examined how individual readers compose different readings from the same literary text. In creating meaning, readers tap their own fund of feelings, beliefs, attitudes, languages, and sociocultural experiences (e.g., Applebee, 1977; Beach & Hynds, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978). Literature invites such personalized reading because it is inherently problematic, with its ambiguous, metaphoric language and gaps in knowledge that require searching for likely connections between events, generating possible links between human intention and action, and testing a personal sense of lifelikeness (Bruner, 1986; Iser, 1978; Langer, 1990). Thus, literature can stimulat readers to imagine and reflect, as psychologist Jerome Bruner puts it, inviting our "trafficking in human possibilities rather than settled certainties"(p. 26). Literature thereby opens us "to dilemmas, to the hypothetical, to the range of possible worlds that a text can refer to" (p. 159).

Because of the problematic nature of texts and the sociocultural diversities of readers, then, text discussion can be particularly suited to provoke an interplay of differences. I want to propose that a critical dialogue about these differences can be the starting point for growth in multicultural consciousness. Support for literature discussion as a means of developing sociocultural awareness and critical reflection comes from several fields, including literary criticism, literacy pedagogy, and sociohistorical psychology.

In The Psychology of Art, Vygotsky (1971) argues that it is imperative to allow for the effects of literature that "shape and excite" the individual reader on an unconscious level, but that the teacher should further aim to form reflective consciousness through "intelligent social activity" that extends the "narrow sphere of individual perception" (pp. 79-80). Similarly, Rosenblatt (1978) and other reader-response literary theorists contend that students need to articulate their varied responses to texts in "an environment favorable to uninhibited interchange, as the starting point for growth in critical power" (p. 146). When the text becomes a "more general medium of communication among readers," such discussion can reveal values, assumptions, and life experiences based in cultures or subcultures, including a questioning of dominant cultural "truths." When alternatives challenge a reader's assumptions and understandings, "he may be stimulated to clarify his own values, his own prior sense of the world and its possibilities" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 145). Theoretically, text discussion can provide students with the motivating occasion to derive a new critical awareness of the bases for their own and others' sociocultural perspectives.

Authoritarian Classroom Contexts

But over the century empirical evidence suggests that such reflection about different perspectives in discussion rarely occurs in American schools. Even in literature class many teachers still use the recitation--asking closed questions and evaluating correctness of student answers--as the main structure of classroom talk (Alverman, O'Brien & Dillon, 1990; Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969). This pattern is quite consistent with the tendency to teach and test discrete facts and skills in our educational system. Studies of literary instruction often describe how students

are cut off from their own sociocultural response and thinking by teachers insisting on their own "correct," culture-bound translations (e.g., Marshall, 1987, 1989). In such contexts, students consume interpretations, replete with their "cultural blindnesses and habits of mind" (Carr, 1990) and few find opportunities to use their developed social-cognitive abilities to compose meanings (Applebee, 1990; Hynds, 1989; Langer, 1987). It may not be surprising, then, that results of recent large-scale testing in the U.S suggest that most students have not learned to compose and support their own interpretations of what they read (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, 1989; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981). International studies suggest as well that students learn culturally approved ways of responding to texts, narrowing their responses to literature as they move through each country's education system, eventually mirroring their teachers' dominant cultural interpretations (Purves, 1973, 1981; Steffensen, Joag-Des, & Anderson, 1979; Dollerup, 1983-89).

A Model for a Dialogic Pedagogy from Empirical Studies

Over the past six years, I have investigated what roles the secondary-school teacher might play in promoting growth in students' reflection about sociocultural perspectives through text discussions (Miller, 1988, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1992d). To begin, I observed widely in schools to identify teachers who had successfully introduced open-forum discussion into multicultural classroom groups. These groups included African American, Asian American and Latino/Latina students--cultural groups sometimes relegated to a "culture of silence" (Friere, 1970) in our predominantly European American society. Open-forum discussion classes were difficult to find. For example, in one school noted for its progressive teaching approaches, only 10% of the English teachers held discussion, defined in the studies as putting forth and examining more than one point of view (Bridges, 1979). The classes I did identify as using open-forum discussions were in urban and suburban schools, in both rich and poor communities. The teachers were mostly women with more than fifteen years' experience, both African and European Americans.

In the series of ethnographic studies in five schools, I examined (a) how teachers transformed typical ways of talking in classrooms to promote reflection through text discussion; and (b) what new ways of thinking about alternative perspectives developed in these social-cognitive contexts over time.

During the year-long observations in each of ten case-study classes, I audiotaped discussions, transcribed them, and interviewed students and teachers about their perceptions of the purposes for discussion, the roles participants played, and the thinking that occurred. Stimulated-recall sessions with transcriptions of discussions were particularly useful in tapping students' and teachers' perceptions of the developing context and emerging thinking. Through recursive analysis of the different data types and participant perspectives, I identified recurring themes and examined their relationships to identify the patterns in each context which prompted and shaped student reflection.

The teachers who successfully transformed the typical classroom context focused on

creating conditions that produced motivated discussion about texts. Working with similar sets of principles, these teachers fostered what students called "the right atmosphere for discussion," arousing student response and reflection about differences in four closely connected, mutually reinforcing ways: 1) inducing a new stance towards texts, 2) provoking collaborative reflection about alternatives, 3) scaffolding dialogic heuristics, and 4) encouraging student-initiated and sustained inquiry. In what follows, I elaborate each condition in turn, drawing on my studies for examples of productive strategies.

Inducing a New Stance Toward Texts

First of all, teachers who successfully transformed classroom ways of talking did nothing less than create a new classroom epistemology. In their verbal and nonverbal behaviors, they created a space where texts were open to multiple responses, interpretations and ways of knowing. In essence, these teachers initiated a new learning community by sending consistent messages that they would not function as the class text authority and by encouraging students to respond to and question the text and each other to make and examine their own meanings.

These new role expectations and purposes were communicated persistently in many ways. Sometimes the teachers signalled a distribution of authority physically, often placing the desks in a circle and sitting there with students. They asked genuine questions about what puzzled them in the text and about how different students responded: for example, asking in a perplexed tone, "I wondered why that last reason was different--What do you think?" or "How do you feel about of Holden Caufield so far?" They focused on students' learning to ask questions of texts during reading and journal writing and to take those questions to discussion and further reading and writing. They helped students learn to try out answers that held a text problem open to possibilities by patiently exhibiting and encouraging new behaviors that avoided absolute statements. For instance, they modelled a reflective tentativeness in speech, often beginning with "I'm not sure" or "Maybe" or "Could it be?" They focused attention on students' making and considering meanings by allowing long silences for thinking, asking for elaborations, and not evaluating the "truth" of comments.

In general, these teachers communicated that reading itself was dialogic; that is, in order to understand, students had to have a conversation with the text, to question and speak for the text in the words of their own languages (Gadamer, 1976; Salvatori, 1986) and not depend on teacher translators. Students learned to annotate the text margins with their own responses and questions, a written dialogue with the author of the text. They learned to capture responses and questions in journals--to materialize initial reaction and thinking, making it available for further reflection in discussion and writing. Successful teachers moved their classes to a space where multicultural interpretations could be produced and examined, where power relations were restructured to unsilence students.

Successful teachers also provided a consistent sense of group purpose through procedural explanations and descriptions that gave students the "feel" for collaborating on the oral text of discussion. One teacher, for instance, emphasized social-cognitive strategies for listening actively

("Look at the speaker," "Try to understand"), both before discussions and as needed during them. She suggested often that students respond to the previous speaker so that "meanings can build and grow." The class spent time talking about whether their discussions were successful and about what that meant to them. Consistent groundrules and metacommunication of these kinds helped them to construct their discussion goals. Students in that group often told the story of developing respect for difference, "how we learned to listen" because "[we] were trying to understand together."

Many students accustomed to passivity in traditional classrooms dominated by teacher interpretation, such as Enrique, a Puerto Rican boy, were at first quiet and just observed to learn "what we were supposed to do." In time, some students took up the invitation to see themselves in new roles--as active responders and composers of meaning who performed their own understandings. Differences emerged and meaning itself became problematic. As students learned to try to understand emerging alternatives, that new attitude contributed to the developing atmosphere of safety, a respect for difference which encouraged others to pose questions and take the risk of casting the text into their own sociocultural terms.

In this developing climate for discussion, Enrique said he eventually was "not afraid to talk out." Student interviews revealed that an incentive of making sense through talking (Britton, 1970) grew out of students' growing feeling of authority to talk back to texts and each other. Thus, with their teachers' assistance, students were developing a dialogic stance, approaching the text as an artifact to be questioned and transformed by readers responding, interpreting, and discussing--as "an occasion for meaning, not a meaning in itself" (Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986). As in a just society committed to multiculturalism, the different students in the class were learning to play a part, have a voice, ask questions, make meanings, and reflect on diverse understandings.

In contrast, when this crucial first step of creating a new stance toward meanings was undermined, discussion failed. In a few contexts, teachers asked for student interpretations through open-ended questions, but then in other ways signalled that the literary text contained a single, authoritative meaning. For instance in one largely African American class, students offered different interpretations of an Aristotle excerpt, but the teacher prodded students toward one interpretation, discouraging differences as failures in thinking rather than promoting them as opportunities for reflection. Eventually the teacher spoke for the author, telling students "what Aristotle is saying." These students became increasingly passive, waiting "to see if we had the right answer." Without an authentic "sense-making" activity there was no motivation for thoughtful engagement, no perplexity, no problem, no "matter at stake" to provoke response and reflection (Dewey, 1933). Only when students felt the interpretive authority that motivated them to break the silence and generate responses from their own perspectives, did a dialogic "problem-solving environment" (Vygotsky, 1981) emerge.

Provoking Collaborative Reflection about Alternatives

Still, as individual responses materialized in oral language, students were at first surprised by their varied perspectives. Challenged by these multiple ways of understanding, at first some students dogmatically asserted, as one student put it, "I'm right, I know I'm right." In response, successful teachers prompted collaborative reflection about alternatives by valuing expression of differences and providing strategies for reflecting about them.

The successful teachers modelled probing strategies for responding to different perspectives. Frequently, they questioned in a puzzled tone, "So are you saying....?" or "So why do you say that?" Students tried these useful strategies as conversational responses to alternatives. To prompt this reflection, these teachers questioned to generate or emphasize students' differences. For instance, they continued to seek alternatives--"Any other ideas?" and dramatized existing differences to prompt explanation--"Where do you stand?" Successful teachers monitored student nonverbal reactions to encourage oral questioning of difference: "Did you want to ask Anna a question?" They made sure the group pursued a student question as an authentic problem: "Let's go back to Julia's question, 'Why does that last line contradict?' What do you think?" By guiding students to raise their questions orally about texts and others' perspectives and consider them together, teachers were urging students to pursue personal response and understanding in a public dialectic.

In that same spirit, the most successful teachers asked students to bring evidence from their lives into the discussion. Often they asked for personal experience--"Has that ever happened to you?" and sometimes they modelled how their own stories served as justification for meaning--"That reminds me of something that happened in my family...." Hearing different sources of support for interpretations ("My mother taught me...", "My grandmother always said..."), students had opportunities to see how sociocultural experiences influenced views of texts and the world.

To illustrate, in one urban-school discussion sequence, two ninth-grade students questioned each other to try to make sense of their different interpretations of a character. Ma Li, a newly immigrated Chinese American girl from a professional family, responded with examples of how "I think about myself to solve problems" in life. But for Andre, a popular African American boy from a poor urban neighborhood, thinking about himself was something painful to be avoided because the future was uncertain; he explained, "I don't know, I could be a junkie in ten years." Ma Li and Andre explained and questioned each other in a serious way, prompting examination of the grounds for their assumptions or beliefs and an awareness of the sociocultural bases for their different views. (It should be noted that, for many reasons, this conversation about difference was unlikely to happen on its own in the school hallways.)

Finally, some successful teachers introduced critical perspectives students had not, to problematize unexamined assumptions in the text or the discussion. Teachers suggested, for example, that Jane Eyre might be unable to see how her position as a woman diminished her choices in that society, that Conrad's perspective might be limited by racist social norms of his time, or that working harder might not solve the problems of an immigrant family. Such critical

perspectives introduced as possibilities sometimes prompted the questioning of dominant cultural assumptions and values of the text, a "reading against the cultural grain" (Gonzales, in press). To this end, some teachers paired texts to dramatize the provisional and incomplete nature of any single text, such as discussing essays on the Gulf War written from both American and Iraqui perspectives. As Knippling (in press) has urged, these teachers saw the need to ask not only "What is proposed and incorporated in this text?" but also, "What is subordinated or ignored?"

In all, the monitoring stream of the dialogue--the questioning, challenging, evaluative part--was introduced as strategic response to the stream of generated alternatives. Successful teachers actively guided the talk to create a strong sense of purposeful collaborative activity, at the same time that they provided specific strategies for engaging in reflective dialogue about differences. As theories of developing cognition through coherent, meaningful social activity (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Leontiev, 1978, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) would suggest, the specific strategies for dealing with difference became meaningful in light of a group's guiding purpose (e.g., trying to understand together). Thus, teachers moved class talk to a space where difference flourished, and they supported students' learning how to respond purposefully so the tension of difference could produce mutual growth.

Scaffolding Dialogic Heuristics

A third condition in the successful discussion classes was this: Teachers scaffolded learning of heuristics for making and evaluating meanings. That is, when students needed assistance, teachers conversationally supported their activity by providing appropriate strategies for elaborating and questioning their own responses and meanings. Effective teachers saw their role in scaffolding these heuristics, often sequences of questions, as stimulating inquiry by providing useful tools for considering individual reactions, questions, and differences, tools students eventually could use on their own. They, thus, supported the move from initial responses toward more reasoned ones in a dialogic procedure that shuttled between text and self, interpretations and evaluations, personal response and public responsibilities.

For example, one teacher used a discussion routine to encourage student connections to texts: She would ask for student response to character actions, follow up by asking, "Can you connect that to your experience?" and then, in response to students' stories, "So what do you make of the character based on these experiences?" This recurring sequence of questioning helped students consciously to draw on personal sociocultural knowledge to inform their text understandings and, then, to examine these different versions of the text. In another dialogic heuristic, a teacher used questions to help students structure support for their ideas: When a student made an unsupported claim, the teacher asked, "Could you give an example?" After the student gave an example, the teacher asked conversationally for the connection, "Could you explain what you mean?" Then the teacher asked how it all related to the question they had been pursuing. In the face of alternative perspectives in this class, students took on this way of structuring their arguments to justify and evaluate their interpretations about texts and the world. The repeated intellectual routines shaped context-specific ways of talking and thinking about texts and sociocultural perspectives.

In another class, the teacher's questions moved students from their own diverse responses to text events to characters' responses and, then, to speculation about reasons for differences. For instance, after asking how students felt about Mark's leaving South Africa in Kaffir Boy, she asked about how the mother felt, how the father felt, and then how different assumptions and values might account for students' and characters' varied reactions. By habitually playing perspectives off each other in this way, the teacher was creating a dialectic for considering multiple possible justifiable meanings existing simultaneously. Some of these teachers supported building meaning dialectically by moving from one text to another. For example, in discussion the teacher would ask, "Does that remind you of anything else we've read?" And then in response to students, "So what can you say about this text, considering that link?" Each specific dialectic served as a way for assisting students to think about what they knew and, over time, as a habitual way of structuring their knowing.

Teachers often named the routines and made them explicit, to encourage students to use them consciously. In a class labeled "at-risk," where the teacher modelled and explained questioning routines, students said they were learning to "ask ourselves those 'what-if' questions" to generate possible meanings. Teachers explained complex heuristics in lessons, such as in presentations of Freudian and Feminist critical perspectives used as "tools" (one teacher said) for creating understanding. These were treated as conceptual lenses for constructing possibilities for the text. In whole class and small groups, students examined how questioning the text from these perspectives allowed them to see in new ways.

During discussions, the teacher scaffolded use of these heuristics: When a student questioned "why Jane [Eyre] was so upset in the red room," the teacher responded, "What do you think a modern psychologist would say was happening there?" Students pursued their question with this set of conceptual tools, using what they had learned about a sense of powerlessness and repressing emotions. In follow-up questions, the teacher prompted students to consider possibilities by moving back and forth from the text to various interpretive and evaluative perspectives to see the scene from multiple points of view (e.g., by considering gender issues and archetypes). This teacher's questioning routines prompted students to draw on a range of critical perspectives they had learned for approaching text.

Sometimes teachers structured activities in small group projects which similarly scaffolded thinking that moved from one text or perspective to another. Teachers asked students, for instance, to prepare arguments for two different perspectives on the question, "Was Brutus an honorable man?" by examining and explaining evidence to be used during informal class debate. After a class screening of the film "The Dead Poet's Society," one teacher asked her class to re-see A Separate Peace through the lens of this film.

Writing before, during, and after reading and discussion provided another major means of scaffolding heuristics for elaborating and considering meanings. Some teachers explicitly asked students to use literary response journals as an informal, private forum to generate ideas and elaborate them by using the heuristic strategies. As students in one class read and discussed, they kept a "double-entry" response journal (Berthoff, 1981) as a means of materializing and structuring a personal dialogue. On one side of the page, they generated responses, questions, and

quotations and, on the other side, in reply, speculated about and evaluated possible connections, answers, significance, and interpretations. This writing format encouraged students to draw on the teacher-scaffolded heuristics, such as the "key sentence" structure in one class: Students raised a sentence out of the text that "felt important" and, then, speculated about its significance in the second entry. They moved back and forth from quoted text to interpretation, from that part of the text to other parts, from interpretations to explanations and evaluations of those possibilities. Such structuring moves became a conscious "dialectic of forming...which is encouraged by looking and looking again" (Berthoff, 1981, p. 65). During stimulated-recall interviews with discussion transcriptions and journals, students described how they elaborated their responses by using these strategic routines. In this and other classes, discussing and writing functioned together, as two dialogic means of scaffolding the generation and evaluation of possibilities.

In Vygotsky's sense (1978), the teachers were lending their structuring consciousness to support student reflection, a kind of "instructional scaffolding" (Bruner, 1978; Langer & Applebee, 1986) which supported new ways of thinking about texts and alternative perspectives. Other similar sequences of questions in discussion (and in writing or group activities) structured dialectics for making and evaluating meanings--to prompt students to find problems in texts, hypothesize explanations, and move from character actions to intentions. Students began to use the specific discussion routines to elaborate their responses, to interpret the text, and to consider their own and others' questions, assumptions, and habits of mind.

Encouraging Student-initiated and Sustained Dialogic Inquiry

Finally, successful teachers patiently monitored changes in students' thinking and then, when students needed less assistance, took on a less active role. After weeks of discussion, students typically began to raise their own questions and initiate scaffolded strategies and routines to pursue understandings together. This development is consonant with Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) formulation that complex cognitive processes originate in assisted performances through social interactions around purposeful activity. Students internalized help from teachers and students as those strategies and routines solved perceived problems of understanding, becoming socially useful for interpreting or evaluating meanings in their groups.

After five months of discussion, tenth graders in a general English class initiated the opening question for the first time in a discussion of Thucydides' dramatization from The Peloponnesian Wars. Together they pursued differing perspectives on the advisability of fighting for freedom at all costs. When Terry, an African American girl, responded to another's claim that "just causes win," she called to question this cultural homily with counterexamples from her life in the city to illustrate, "That's a fairy tale." She structured her argument by using the heuristic she had learned in discussion for justifying her claims. In lengthy collaborations (e.g., 30 turns of talk) without teacher help, students monitored their understanding of meanings, requesting translation ("So are you saying...?") and calling to question ("So why do you say that?") for the purpose of making sense out of alternative versions of the text and the world. The dual streams of critical reflection--generating meanings and questioning/monitoring them--were thus dramatized as different voices in discussion. Students were spurred to clarify and justify as they

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moved back and forth between text and self, between their personal responses and the needs of the group to understand and be persuaded. In this discussion there was an upturn in the frequency of student questions, evidence, explanation, and collaboration, increases that were sustained in subsequent discussions. Students were amazed by this inquiry that they had sustained together. Discussion was never the same in this class when they learned that they could take over both parts of the dialogue--generating and justifying possibilities and questioning and evaluating them.

In this class and in others, students invited and assisted each other and began to internalize an interdependent phase of strategy use (Tudge, 1990). Their change was most evident in their developing ability to "participate in qualitatively new collaborative activities" (Moll, 1990) as their group, provoked by the constructive conflict of difference, appropriated new ways of thinking with language. The qualitative changes in students' motivation and collaborative thinking activities provided evidence that they were internalizing dialogic strategies as language tools. Produced through social activity to mediate texts and readers talking, the dialogic strategies gradually formed students' inner activity (Hedegaard, 1990; Leontiev, 1978; Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

Other evidence from these studies suggests that discussion experiences were shaping a new dialogic consciousness in students. In stimulated-recall interviews, individual students frequently reported their internal dialogues with the oral discussion texts, where they directed and guided their own thinking with self-conversation, a significant transition to taking control through self-assistance (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). Their conscious use of scaffolded cognitive strategies was evident in interviews, for instance, when they pointed to how they used questions to spur their own and others' thinking. A student in an at-risk class explained, "We ask ourselves these questions and if they sound good, we ask the class." Another student reported the strong influence of his new internal dialogue: "After literature discussions I have discussions in my mind, so it is hard to concentrate in gym [physical education] class."

After discussions, many of the teachers asked students to write questions and compose answers for more formal assigned writing. Student papers often revealed a kind of writing back to other students' discussion comments and readings. Sometimes students incorporated responses to perspectives raised in class discussions in papers that seemed to be written "in the shadow of a dialogue, as opposed to straight monologue" (Petrosky, 1992). One long collaborative sequence in discussion that began with a student questioning why Leper in A Separate Peace "acts weird" ended with Lynn's quoting a "key sentence" about evolution and speculating, "Maybe Leper didn't evolve." In his final paper, Willy chose to reply to that possibility and elaborate it by examining why some evolved and others did not in this context of Germany during the war. Spurred by this question about evolution, he sustained his own inquiry, using a variety of the scaffolded heuristics for making sense.

Creating Dialogic Consciousness from Multicultural Difference

Taken together, these empirical investigations provide evidence that in contexts open to multiple perspectives, students can learn to respond actively, and reflect critically on different

ways of speaking and knowing. In their dialogic pedagogy, teachers initiated new roles, the motivating tasks, the social purposes for talking, and they provided assistance at points of need. In the presence of sociocultural differences, they pressed for explanation, for evidence, for understanding. Over time, their students became aware of the multiple, sometimes conflicting languages (e.g., of classes, races, genders, families, ethnic communities) for understanding (Bakhtin, 1981).

Creating this change is a dynamic process that begins with a classroom culture where difference is valued and develops through the play of tension and release that structures attempts to understand (Gadamer, 1976). Students learned first-hand the pull of other ways of shaping the world. Discussion provided the means of testing ideas from multiple perspectives, by questioning the basis for attitudes, ideas, beliefs, views. With teacher scaffolding, students learned how to move from unreflective speech to reflect consciously about the world through others' eyes. Such dialogic thinking moved back and forth from self to others, and among opposing points of view. The importance of discussion of multiple perspectives in multicultural education centers on this developing dialogic consciousness. It is a means of achieving awareness of one's own and others' assumptions and values, of creating a reasoned position beyond sociocentrism.

In interviews these teachers revealed that changes in their approaches to literature instruction began through conversations with other teachers (and then with themselves) about how reader-response and language-use theories could inform teaching and learning in their classes. They "read" each class to find ways to enact their social-cognitive goals. Through their dialogues with students, as they reflected about what was happening, about what students could learn to do through supported conversation, the teachers developed, as well. They developed ways of taking a dialogic stance toward each class, transforming each social-cognitive context by responding to what students there needed. When an at-risk class had trouble reading, one teacher read aloud and stopped to model, explain, and engage students in meaning-making and questioning strategies; her college-bound students she found required less support. When the class was largely European American, some teachers introduced critical perspectives that students did not generate on their own to question dominant cultural perspectives, to seek out what was excluded or marginalized in texts. For these successful teachers, teaching became an ongoing reflective conversation continually under construction by students and a teacher, "a human drama, not a mechanical device" (Petrosky, 1992, p. 164).

Many have noted that discussion is not ethically neutral, but is associated with moral or social values of justice and respect for persons (Bridges, 1979; Paul, 1984). These changes I have described in the fabric of the social relations in classrooms encouraged social and cognitive values fundamental to a democratic classroom culture, producing the motivation for critical reflection. Students became inclined to raise and pursue questions and to socially justify beliefs as bases for decisions, rather than accept dogma, authority, and tradition without reflection.

With their teachers' help, students in discussion-centered classes were cognitively transforming themselves, developing the means of understanding diversity rather than insisting on one authoritarian, culture-bound perspective. Through literature discussions in one class, Jack, a European American, described how he and his classmates changed from a "debating" attitude

of "disputing" and "talking at" those who differed, to an ability to listen to and "talk with" others. He concluded that alternative perspectives could exist simultaneously: "You don't have to come to 'That's the way it is!' and 'That's the point!' [He pounded the desk.] You can just keep on talking about it, you know. And there are so many points of view, I don't think anybody ever could totally agree in discussion." As he learned to respect different perspectives, learning from those differences became natural. As we teachers begin to reflect on how to create new classroom contexts where supported dialogues can develop in discussion, writing, and group activity, we can begin to develop pedagogies and meaningful occasions to transform our students' thinking in these ways.

If, instead, multicultural education is limited only to new booklists and cultural information, or a curricular add-on for "minorities," it may fail to become an integral part of schooling, possibly deleted later under time pressures. The question "Who is multicultural education for?" is a crucial one (Knippling, in press). These dialogues in classrooms benefited all students. Even Nicole so fearful of losing her thoughts that she never spoke in discussion, described how she was drawn into an ongoing internal dialogue. Friere's pedagogy of knowing subjects achieving significance through dialogue was negotiated in these classrooms: "The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship" (1970, p. 73). Discussion clearly contributed to individual reflection but more than that, contributed to a sense of group through interdependent relations, resulting in a valuing of diversity and collaboration central to social justice. Many educators focus on our country's need to find similarities as well as differences among our sociocultural groups. Discussion, I want to emphasize, also reveals such common ground. Individuals are rarely monolithic in their cultural makeup, but rather are simultaneously members of several cultures and subcultures. Thus, diversity is likely even in classes that are superficially homogeneous. But further, agreements and disagreements in class discussions of texts I observed rarely fell along racial or ethnic lines. As socially justifying beliefs became valued, students began to explore their similarities and differences on this rational basis. Multicultural groups with a common perspective worked together to elaborate their arguments.

Consider the case of Mei Wong. After ten discussions, this shy Chinese-American first spoke, giving an extended synthesis of the group's interpretation from her point of view. Her classmates, for the first and only time all year, applauded. They understood her courage in trying her voice and appreciated her convincing summary as evidence of their success, too. In short, students also learned that they did have "bright flags" of commonality (Stimpson, in press); these "unities," however, were created in talking together, not from lessons told by teachers.

If all students are to become more powerfully literate in our complex, multicultural world, I believe we must begin by creating classroom contexts where motivated discussion, supported by teachers at points of need, provokes the dialectic of critical reflection. The problems of social justice, intercultural and interethnic contacts, and peaceful coexistence of peoples are central issues in contemporary societies. Developing theory and practice to guide us in educating our students for life in multicultural nations and a multiethnic world is a social necessity. This description of the guiding principles and the influence of a dialogic pedagogy aims to contribute to this important agenda.

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